Report of the Diagnostic Review for Fayette County Schools

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Part I: Findings

The Findings section presents the External Review team's recognition of powerful practices, and areas of practice that require improvement.

This section contains an evaluation of standards and indicators, conclusions concerning powerful practices and improvements needed related to each of the standards, and a description of the evidence examined by the Diagnostic Review team. Indicators are evaluated individually, then the standard is evaluated holistically by the Diagnostic Review team to arrive at a score for the standard.

Standard 1: Purpose and Direction

Standard		Performance Score
The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commits to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.		**1.50**

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	- Improvement Plan - Executive Summary - District Self-Assessment - Interviews - Staff Surveys	2
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	- Executive Summary - Surveys - Interviews	1
1.3	The system leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	- Observations 2008-10 and 2010-12 District Improvement Plans - District website - Interviews - Executive Summary - Surveys	1
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student	- Interviews - Executive Summary - Board Policy (08.11) - Observations	2

	learning.	• 2008-10 and 2010-12 District	

Standard 1 Strengths and Opportunities

Strength:
There is an overarching "theme" of pride toward the school district throughout the community. The district has cultivated community involvement and "buy in".
Description:
Throughout the district, multiple sources such as school visits, perception surveys, district self-assessment, schools/ district staff and community partners demonstrated pride, mutual respect and collegiality for one another, their schools, students and families.

Opportunity for Improvement:
An opportunity currently exists for district leadership and administration to establish a method for shared leadership with schools based on a transparent process for input, dialogue and direction for improving student achievement. This may require a review of district support structures. The district currently has a successful process established for stakeholder (community and parents) input and action. This approach should be further evaluated to ensure fidelity of implementation with schools.
Description:
Survey, Interview, and observation evidence revealed that all schools are eager to commit to a culture of providing a rigorous and equitable educational experience to meet the needs of all learners. Authority for this action is provided to district leadership through BOE policy (08.11). The district's mission cannot be accomplished unless direction and guidance from the district is established to develop a highly functioning instructional delivery system. Coherence across all AdvanceEd Standard 1 indicators must be aligned and implemented if students are to graduate ready for college, career or life. The implementation of a communication and support structure for all schools will ensure that the district leads and owns responsibility to create a clear systematic process and protocol that will guarantee continuous assistance and support for schools in achieving the district vision.

Standard 2: Governance and Leadership

Standard		Performance Score
The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.		**3.33**
Indicator	**Source of Evidence**	**Performance Level**
2.1 The governing body establishes policies and support practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	• Website: Policies and Procedures • Board Agendas, Minutes, and Calendars • Survey Results	4
2.2 The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	• Board Minutes • LRC Website (Code of Conduct) • Professional Development Menu (online) • Equity Council Information • Board of Education Professional Development Information	3
2.3 The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	• Website: Policies and Procedures • Board Agendas, Minutes, and Calendars • Survey Results	3
2.4 Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	• CDIP • Self Assessment • Online Artifact Review • Board Minutes	4
2.5 Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	• CDIP • Self Assessment • Online Artifact Review • Board and cabinet	4

		Minutes • Interviews • Survey Results	
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	• Survey Results • Interviews • Artifact Review	2

Standard 2 Strengths and Opportunities

Strength 1:
Basic policies and structures exist to manage the district.
Description:
Interviews and artifact review determined that the district maintains required structures and governance policies that promote effective operation. The Board of Education, the superintendent, and IAKSS staff work collectively to ensure that schools are provided with effective resources.

Strength 2:
District leadership successfully promotes and supports a district-wide culture that all available resources and policies are used in helping students reach their potential.
Description:
A review of board minutes revealed an intentional focus on celebrating student and staff successes. The Comprehensive District Improvement Plan contains numerous elements designed to enhance student learning opportunities and promote effective resource use. Stakeholders are active and involved partners in district-wide planning.

Opportunity for Improvement 1:
Create policies that promote consistency in employee supervision and evaluation processes that will result improved professional practice and student success.
Description:
Though staff survey results reported that 78% of staff and 63% of parents agree or strongly agree with individual school governance and leadership practices, the district's Self-Assessment revealed a need to "find consistency in a district of 38,000 students, 6,000 employees, and 56 schools" through processes that monitor employee supervision and evaluation. TELL survey results indicated 92% of teachers strongly agree/agree with statement "teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction" and 79% strongly agree/agree that teacher performance is assessed objectively. However, 24% of Fayette County teachers strongly disagree/disagree that the district's teacher evaluation procedure is consistent (state average 16%). The district and Board of Education are encouraged to review and revise evaluation and supervision procedures so that staff performances based on professional practice and growth and student performance and growth are consistently administered throughout the district.

Opportunity for Improvement 2:
Ensure that district-wide initiatives and school plans include input from all stakeholders.
Description:
Artifact review and interviews suggested that district plans contain contributions from various stakeholder groups. However, school visits and interviews revealed that some school plans were created without input from all members of the school community. District staff is encouraged to review school plans to ensure stakeholder participation in the process.

Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning

Standard		Performance Score
The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.		**2.17**
Indicator	**Source of Evidence**	**Performance Level**
3.1 The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	• Interviews • School level curriculum documents • Survey results • Walk-through documents • Blueprint for Success	2
3.2 Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	• Interviews • School level curriculum documents • Survey results • Walk-through documents	2
3.3 Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	• Interviews • Walk-through documentation • Blueprint for Success • Survey data	2
3.4 System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	• Walkthrough reports • School self-assessment • District self-assessment • Interviews	2
3.5 The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	• Interviews • School self - assessment • District self-	2

		• assessment • School documents • Walkthrough reports	
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	• Interviews • School self - assessment • District self- assessment • School documents • Walkthrough reports • Survey results • Blueprint for Success	2
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	• Interviews • District self- assessment • School self- assessment	3
3.8	The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress.	• Interviews • Observations • Event notices • Family Resource Center documentation	2
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	• Interviews • School self - assessment • District self- assessment • School documents • Surveys • Observations	2
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	• Interviews • School self - assessment • District self- assessment • School documents	2
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	• Interviews • District self-	2

		• assessments • School self-assessments • Walkthrough reports	
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	• Interviews • Student achievement data • Observations • Budgets	3

Standard 3 Strengths and Opportunities

Strength:
The district provides resources to its schools so they can design and implement comprehensive systems of service which allows them to address needs of its students and families (social workers, behavior coaches, health clinics, etc.)
Description:
Interviews and observations showed that students and families benefited from wrap-around services.

Opportunity for Improvement 1:
Provide staff professional development that includes a repertoire of strategies to meet the students' instructional and behavioral needs.
Description:
Interviews and observations indicated that the district should implement professional development on differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

Opportunity for Improvement 2:
An opportunity exists to include special education, E.S.L. and all non-core subject area teachers at the elementary level in the district professional learning communities. We would further recommend the district develop a system to implement and monitor the effectiveness of the professional learning communities process at all levels with all teachers.
Description:
Through the use of a structure already in place the district can provide a platform for the special education, E.S.L. and all non-core subject area teachers to discuss strategies and curriculum. These teachers have a great bearing on the education of our most needy learners. Through interview with district personnel we learned that closing the achievement gap is a high priority.

Opportunity for Improvement 3:
District leadership should review and refine the process by which curriculum, instruction, and assessment are monitored throughout the system.
Description:
District leadership has expressed the desire to promote more ownership of curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the school level. While this is important, the district must use a systematic method to ensure that the school level work is effectively improving instructional practice and student learning. The systematic method should not only include the collection and analysis of data; but also ensure that identified needs are addressed and that progress toward goals is monitored.

Opportunity for Improvement 4:
Ensure that consistent, rigorous instruction is evident in all classrooms throughout the district.
Description:
The Blueprint for Success sets the expectation for schools to achieve at high levels by focusing on four major questions: What are we teaching? How do we know if kids are learning it? What do we do if they don't? What do we do when they already know it? Educators should use these questions to guide their planning and engage in collegial conversations about what is best for their students. Teachers should incorporate 21st century learning skills and strategies within their teaching that will actively engage students in collaborative work, discussions, and further their understanding. It is crucial that all teachers engage all students in rigorous instruction.

Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems

Standard		Performance Score
The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.		**2.50**
Indicator	**Source of Evidence**	**Performance Level**
4.1 The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	• District Self-Assessment • Survey Results • Interviews • School Visits • Web-based resources	3
4.2 Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	• District Self-Assessment • Survey Results • Interviews • School Visits • Web-based resources	3
4.3 The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	• District Self-Assessment • Survey Results • Interviews • School Visits • Web-based resources	3
4.4 The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	• District Self-Assessment • Survey Results • Interviews • School Visits • Web-based resources • Executive Summary	2
4.5 The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	• District Self-Assessment • Survey Results • Interviews • School Visits	3

		• Web-based resources • Ad hoc usage reports	
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	• District Self-Assessment • Survey Results • Interviews • School Visits • Web-based resources such as KDE Tech Readiness Report • District Technology Plan • STC Survey	2
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	• District Self-Assessment • Survey Results • Interviews • School Visits • Web-based resources • Blueprint for a Successful School in Fayette County • Executive Summary	2
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	• District Self-Assessment • Survey Results • Interviews • School Visits • Web-based resources • Blueprint for a Successful School in Fayette County • Executive Summary	1

Standard 4 Strengths and Opportunities

Strength 1:
The district provides access of resources to support student learning goals.
Description:
School leadership teams, SBDM Councils, and district principals reported that they are provided flexibility in budget development. Artifacts and interviews revealed that the district has been successful in securing additional grant funding to support school and system initiatives, and enjoys a high degree of community support as evidenced by the passage of the "nickel tax".

Strength 2:
The district facilities reflect a focus on current instructional design appropriate and routine maintenance and improvement.
Description:
A review of artifacts indicated resources are allocated for building improvement, renovations, and new construction through a system-wide assessment of needs conducted on a four-year rotation.

Opportunity 1:
Develop a system to evaluate the effectiveness of student and family support services offered through the schools.
Description:
While the district provides a multitude of services for students and families to meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of students, observations revealed there is no defined process in place to evaluate the effectiveness of those services. Intentional and systematic evaluation of effectiveness, coupled with modifications to programming and delivery systems based on that evaluation, would assist in decreasing gaps in academic achievement that perpetuate partially due to unmet student needs.

Opportunity 2:
Enhance the implementation of the technology plan to address infrastructure, hardware, software, and training opportunities for school staff.
Description:
In reviewing the artifacts, the team discovered that the district has a well-developed Technology Plan with the potential for a systemic delivery of equitable services, routine maintenance, and additional tools to meet the teaching, learning and operational needs of all stakeholders. Optimal utilization of the technology plan requires continuous communication and focused equitable implementation of the plan. Further, the increase in the current adult technology competencies to integrate skills with classroom instruction should assist in improving student achievement.

Opportunity 3:
Develop and implement a district-wide vision, policy and plan for increasing cultural competency practices in all schools.

Description:
In light of acknowledged issues around cultural competence of staff, it is necessary to increase staff capacity in this area that goes beyond simply making staff aware of the issues of diverse learners and issues relating to poverty. Successful implementation of a coherent, district-wide cultural competence plan requires intentional monitoring and evaluation with periodic revision and/or revisiting of the district's plan. Successful implementation will enhance positive relationships between students and staff members resulting in reduced achievement gaps and an improvement in overall school culture.

Opportunity 4:
Establish a better balance between the SBDM councils with appropriate guidance and support from central administration.

Description:
There is a concern that school functions, such as the allocation and alignment of resources, long range planning, and school support, relies heavily on site-based decisions, with little to no direction and oversight provided by central administration. Responsibility for equitable and efficient allocation of a variety of resources begins with the district.

Standard 5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement

Standard		Performance Score
The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.		**2.40**
Indicator	**Source of Evidence**	**Performance Level**
5.1 The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	• School Visit Documentation • District Self-Assessment Review • Superintendent Overview	3
5.2 Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.	• School Visit Documentation • District Self-Assessment Review • Superintendent Overview • District Survey Results	2
5.3 Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	• School Visit Documentation • District Self-Assessment Review • District Survey Results	2
5.4 The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	• School Visit Documentation • District Self-Assessment Review • District Survey Results • District Website Review	2
5.5 System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance,	• School Visit Documentation • District Self-	3

		Assessment Review	
and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.		• Superintendent Overview • District Survey Results	

Standard 5 Strengths and Opportunities

Strength 1:
System leaders monitor and communicate information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.
Description:
Student performance reports on state assessments were observed in schools and at the district office.

Opportunity 1:
Implement a formalized structure that monitors the use and review of student and school progress monitoring data. The structure should be systemic and include accountability checks for district staff to ensure the established benchmark activities are being implemented with fidelity.
Description:
Review of district self-assessment, interviews, and school assessments yielded the same conclusion as the Diagnostic Review Team.

Opportunity 2:
While the district has the opportunity to systematically measure district performance, there is a need to further develop and operationalize systems for the use of data. The "Blueprint for a Successful School in Fayette County" provides the framework for beginning of conversations that will aid district and school leaders in identifying district level expectations for student learning, school level implementation plans focused on those expectations, and classroom data reporting to inform the desired outcomes for system improvement.
Description:
Review of district self-assessment, interviews, and school assessments yielded the same conclusion as the Diagnostic Review Team.

Opportunity 3:
The district should develop and implement an individualized professional development program that trains district and school staff on the use of data. The program should be comprehensive to include access, interpretation, and evaluation of data for student and school improvement. To evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development program, the district and school leadership should monitor the PD through the work of teacher collaboration, and observation of individualized instruction for students in the classroom.
Description:
District and school interviews and the district self-assessment revealed a need to develop a comprehensive professional development program around the use of data.

Part II: Conclusions

Commendations

1. **Strong community support and resources**
   a. "The sky is the limit for Fayette County."
2. **Board focused on student success and CCR**
   a. "Ensure that every classroom is a quality classroom."
   b. Well versed in educational research and best practice.
3. **New superintendent appears to be a good "fit" based on the needs of the district:**
   a. Stable district
   b. Refinement of systems and processes
4. **Customer Service initiative**

Improvement Priorities

1. **Evaluate all initiatives in a way that:**
   a. Measures the coherence and effectiveness of each
   b. Reduces the number to increase focus of effort and resources
   c. Reaches from district office to the student's desk
   d. Determine and implement a method for "selective abandonment."
2. **Refine or create systemic processes that:**
   a. Include **clear** expectations
   b. Include direct and indirect **metrics**
   c. Provide results in a simple, understandable format (data dashboard)
   d. Lead to measureable **continuous improvement**
   e. Are learned and **implemented** by appropriate staff
   f. Are **monitored for fidelity** of implementation
3. **Improve consistency and ensure quality of leadership across the district.**
   a. **Clear, measureable, and well-communicated** expectations for culture management and student achievement
   b. Increased mentoring for **all** leaders
   c. Strike a balance between school autonomy and district guidance so that "**every** classroom in Fayette County is a quality classroom."
   d. District must support, guide, and monitor in a meaningful, empowering, and effective way.
4. **Build and implement a professional development program that:**
   a. Is **systemic** and supports the district vision
   b. Includes clear expectations and measures of outcomes
   c. Includes **follow-up** that ensures improved student performance
   d. Is guided by data-driven, student learning needs
5. **Create a professional culture and climate that:**

- Includes everyone as a stakeholder
- Continually **seeks** and **welcomes** input from all internal and external stakeholders
- Ensures **consistency** of implementation of policy and practice
- Provides consistent high-quality customer service in **all** schools and departments
- Ensures an **inclusive** community
- ***Drives out fear***

Next Steps

The system should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.

2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.

3. Develop action plans to address the required actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the required actions.

4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the system's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

5. Continue to meet the standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.